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ABSTRACT

A survey of junior colleges and high schools in the Midwest indicates a trend toward greater usage of machine shorthand. Junior colleges are the strongest proponents of the touch shorthand system, but an increasing number of high schools are also adding touch shorthand to their curriculums. Junior colleges emphasize court reporting as well as secretarial skills as major vocational objectives. Most teachers affirm the effectiveness of machine shorthand in their overall business education programs. (Author)

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A SURVEY OF HIGH SCHOOLS AND JUNIOR COLLEGES TEACHING MACHINE SHORTHAND

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May, 1973

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INTRODUCTION

Interest in machine shorthand appears to be growing. Students disenchanted with manual shorthand systems see TV court reporters effortlessly taking notes at conversational speeds and conclude that the machine has a magic quality which makes shorthand note-taking easy, even at the highest speeds. Backlogs of court cases to be heard call for more court reporters. Court reporters earn good salaries, and their work has an aura of glamor to it as well. Periodical literature and ads of shorthand machine manufacturers stress touch shorthand as a secretarial tool also. Increased numbers of teacher education institutions are adding workshops and courses in methods of teaching touch shorthand.

Eastern Illinois University is one of the teacher education universities which offers a graduate course in Methods of Teaching Touch Shorthand. The course attracts students at both the graduate and the undergraduate levels. The present study sought to measure the "market" for teachers of touch shorthand in the geographic areas where most of the Eastern Illinois University students seek employment; namely, the state of Illinois, plus two metropolitan areas in states adjacent to Illinois.

By mailed questionnaire, the investigator surveyed high schools in St. Louis County; Marion County, Indiana (Indianapolis); Cook County (Chicago); and the forty-six junior colleges of Illinois, to determine the extent to which machine shorthand is included in present or planned curriculums.

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Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to determine what percentage of high schools and junior colleges in the area surveyed are currently offering courses in machine shorthand or who plan to offer such courses in the future. The study also sought information concerning the number and sequence of courses offered, the vocational objectives of those courses; the speed and accuracy required in each course; and the relative attraction of students to the machine courses as compared with the manual shorthand courses. It also sought to compare the drop-out rate of students in the two shorthand systems.

Answers to these questions would enrich the course in Methods of Teaching machine Shorthand by giving insights and practical information to prospective teachers of the machine shorthand system.

Statement of the Problem

This study was an attempt to measure the extent to which machine shorthand is being offered in the curriculums of high schools in Cook County, Illinois (Chicago metropolitan area); St. Louis County, Missouri; and Marion County, Indiana (Indianapolis metropolitan area); and in the junior colleges of Illinois. The survey also sought answers to such questions as: reasons for or against including machine shorthand in future curriculums; the grade levels at which current courses are being taught; minimum speeds and accuracy required to pass each course in a sequence of courses in machine shorthand; the number of years the courses have been taught in each school; the vocational objectives of the courses; and a comparison of student drop-out rates and attraction toward machine shorthand

as compared with manual shorthand systems taught in the same schools. (See the complete questionnaire in the appendix.)

Definition of Terms

The terms machine shorthand and touch shorthand are used interchangeably in this study. Both terms signify that system of recording in which the reporter by means of a keyboard touch system records printed notes on a paper tape. Manual shorthand is that system whereby the recorder uses pen or pencil to record written notes according to a given system--Gregg, Pitman, or other hand-written shorthand system.

The counties surveyed in this study--St. Louis County, Cook County, and Marion County, are usually referred to by the cities which make up the focal point of these counties--St. Louis, Chicago, and Indianapolis respectively.

Procedures

The purpose of this study was to gather information from the junior colleges of Illinois and the high schools of metropolitan Chicago, St. Louis, and Indianapolis concerning the extent to which touch shorthand is being taught, or planned for the future, in the curriculums of the schools surveyed. The study also sought information concerning the level of skill required of students in each course of machine shorthand, the vocational objectives of the courses as presented to the students, and the effectiveness or importance of touch shorthand in the total business curriculums, as perceived by the teachers or administrators responding.

A questionnaire was designed by the investigator to obtain this information. A pilot study, with distribution of the questionnaires to faculty at Eastern Illinois University, enabled the investigator to clarify certain questions and revise the questionnaire as shown in the appendix of this study.

The names of schools surveyed in the study were obtained from the following sources: State Superintendent of Public Instruction, Indianapolis, Indiana; the State Department of Education, Jefferson City, Missouri; Superintendent of Public Instruction in the State of Illinois; and from the Directory of Junior Colleges in Illinois, 1972-1973.

The questionnaire and accompanying letter were sent to the schools in Illinois and Missouri on February 21, 1973. Due to delays in receiving the Indiana Directory of Schools, the Indianapolis schools were not contacted until March 30, 1973. A follow-up letter was sent to the Illinois and Missouri schools on April 5, 1973. A total of 187 schools were contacted; 159 (86%) responded.

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The response of the schools to the mailed questionnaire was gratifyingly high, ranging from 61% of the Indianapolis schools to 100% of the Illinois junior colleges. The total number of participating schools was 159. (See Table 1).

A trend toward wider adoption of machine shorthand into school curricula, though small at the high school level, is discernible in all but the Indianapolis area. Table 2 shows that while only one high school in St. Louis was offering touch shorthand in 1973 (3%), two more had plans to include such a course in the near future, making a total of 9% in the St. Louis high schools; and while Chicago high schools included 7 (12%) now offering touch shorthand, 9 (16%) have plans to include courses in the future, making a total of 28% offering or planning to offer machine shorthand eventually. The junior colleges, however, are the most aggressive "trail-blazers" in incorporating machine shorthand into their curricula, with a total of 43% now offering courses, and 20% planning to do so.

Table 1

QUESTIONNAIRES COMPLETED

Schools	No. sent	Completed and Returned	
		No.	Percent
High schools:			
St. Louis County	45	35	78%
Cook County	63	58	92%
Indianapolis	33	20	61%
Illinois Jr. Colleges	46	46	100%
Total	187	159	86%

Table 2

TOUCH SHORTHAND CURRENTLY TAUGHT
OR PLANNED FOR FUTURE

Schools		T.S. Taught Now	T.S. Planned For Future	Total: Taught or Planned
High schools:				
St. Louis Cty	(35)	1 (3%)	2 (6%)	3 (9%)
Cook County	(58)	7 (12%)	9 (16%)	16 (28%)
Indianapolis	(20)	0	0	0 (0%)
Illinois Jr Coll.	(46)	20 (43%)	9 (20%)	29 (63%)
Total	(159)	28 (18%)	20 (13%)	48 (30%)

The growing interest in the machine system of shorthand is most readily discerned, however, in the fact that all the touch shorthand courses have been so recently incorporated into existing secretarial and other vocational programs. All the respondent schools have added touch shorthand to their programs within the last six years; 86%, within the last four years. Among the junior colleges, the greatest percent have added touch shorthand to their programs within the last year. (See Table 3).

Table 3

NO. OF YEARS TOUCH SHORTHAND HAS BEEN TAUGHT

Schools		Number of Years Taught					
		One	Two	Three	Four	Five	Six
St. Louis H. S.	(1)			1			
Cook Cty H. S.[1]	(6)		2	2	1		1
Ill. Jr. Coll.	(20)	7	3	3	4	2	1
Total	(27)	7	5	6	5	2	2

[1]One school did not respond.

The survey showed that 28 schools were now offering courses in touch shorthand; 20 schools planned to offer it in the future. The investigator asked of those schools planning to offer touch shorthand what prompted them to include machine shorthand in their future plans. Table 4 shows that 50% of the schools responded that student requests for the courses were their primary reasons for making such plans. Other reasons given: another area of skill was thus made available to students; community interest in courses; teacher requests; advancement of the department; investigation of the job potential in the area. Some also said that students might consider this shorthand over Gregg shorthand. Table 4 shows the results of this question.

Table 4

REASONS TOUCH SHORTHAND IS PLANNED FOR FUTURE

Schools	No. planning T.S. Course	Reasons Given	
		Student requests for course	Other reasons
St. Louis H.S.	2	1	1
Cook Cty H.S.	8	4	4
Ill. Jr. Colleges	10	5	5
Total	20	10 (50%)	10 (50%)

Among those schools not planning to offer touch shorthand, reasons for the negative decisions varied. Thirty-seven percent were not convinced of the need for machine shorthand in their curriculums; another forty-seven percent gave a combination of such reasons as: lack of student interest (7%); lack of funds to purchase the machines;lack of staff to teach the courses.

Asked at what level the machine shorthand courses are being taught, 15% of the junior colleges responded that they teach the courses at both the junior college and adult education levels; 85% teach junior college students only. High schools offer courses in grades 10, 11, and 12, plus adult education classes.

Information on speed and accuracy standards set by the schools teaching the skill would be of value to potential shorthand instructors. Therefore, the investigator asked for minimum dictation speed and accuracy percentages required to pass courses in Touch Shorthand I, Touch Shorthand II, Touch Shorthand III, Court Reporting, and "Other." Tables 5, 6, and 7 show substantial variance among the schools studied. However, both high schools and junior colleges cluster at 60 words per minute, 95% accuracy, as minimum speed requirements for Touch Shorthand I and 80 words per minute, 95% accuracy, required for Touch Shorthand II.

Table 5

MINIMUM DICTATION SPEED AND ACCURACY REQUIRED
TOUCH SHORTHAND I

Schools[1]	Words per minute and percent of accuracy						
	40 (90%)	40 (95%)	50 (95%)	60 (95%)	60 (97%)	70 (95%)	80 (95%)
Cook Cty H. S. (6)		1		4		1	
Ill. Jr. Coll. (19)[2]	1	2	1	12	1		2
Total	1 (4%)	3 (12%)	1 (4%)	16 (64%)	1 (4%)	1 (4%)	2 (8%)

[1]St. Louis H. S. and one Cook Cty. H.S. did not respond to this question.

[2]One junior college indicated that grades were based on factors other than speed and accuracy. No minimum speed/accuracy required.

One high school designated Touch Shorthand I as a one-semester course, Touch Shorthand II as the second semester; all others designated each course as a one-year course. All junior colleges except one designated each course as a one-semester course.

Table 6

MINIMUM DICTATION SPEED AND ACCURACY REQUIRED
TOUCH SHORTHAND II

Schools	Words per minute and percent of accuracy						
	60 (90%)	60 (95%)	80 (90%)	80 (95%)	80 (97%)	90 (95%)	100 (95%)
Cook Cty H. S. (6)		2		2		1	1
Ill. Jr. Coll.[1] (17)	1	2	1	9	1	1	2
Total	1 (4%)	4 (17%)	1 (4%)	11 (48%)	1 (4%)	2 (9%)	3 (13%)

[1]Two of the 20 junior colleges offering T.S. offer T.S.I only; one other indicated no minimum speed and accuracy are required.

Only one high school in Cook County offers Touch Shorthand III; the minimum speed/accuracy is 70/95%. The 13 junior colleges offering Touch Shorthand III vary widely in their requirements, as seen in Table 7.

Table 7

MINIMUM DICTATION SPEED AND ACCURACY REQUIRED T.S. III

Schools	Words per minute and percent of accuracy								
	80 95%	90 95%	100 90%	100 95%	100 98%	110 97%	120 95%	120 97%	150 99%
Illinois Jr. Colleges (13)	1	2	1	4	1	1	1	1	1

Court reporting courses are not being taught by any of the high schools surveyed in this study; eight junior colleges offer Court Reporting. A wide range of minimum speed requirements-- from 120 words per minute, 95% accuracy, to 200 words per minute, 99% accuracy, are required. "Other' touch shorthand courses offered included Touch Shorthand IV offered by two schools; Advanced Shorthand offered by one other.

The major vocational objective of junior colleges teaching touch shorthand appears to be court reporting, although 70% of the junior colleges include both court reporting and secretarial positions as alternative vocational objectives for their touch shorthand students. (See Table 8). Several junior colleges cited court reporting as the primary focus of their touch shorthand courses, often citing the need for more reporters in their areas, plus awareness of the increased use of machine reporters rather than manual shorthand reporters in the local courts.

Table 8

VOCATIONAL OBJECTIVES OF TOUCH SHORTHAND

Schools		Secretarial	Spec. Secretarial	Court Rptg.	Sec. & Court Rptg.	Sec., Spec. Secretarial, Ct. Rptg.
St. Louis H.S.	(1)	1				
Cook Cty H.S.	(7)	7				
Ill. Jr. Coll.	(20)	5(25%)	1(5%)		13(65%)	1 (5%)
Totals	(28)	13 (46%)	1 (4%)		13 (40%)	1 (4%)

Insofar as student dropout percentages are concerned, touch shorthand fares well in comparison with manual shorthand; 75% of the schools report a "no higher" dropout percentage in machine shorthand than in manual shorthand. Eighteen percent felt that the dropout percentage is higher in machine shorthand than in manual shorthand. The teachers feel, however, that machine shorthand has no more attraction to students than does manual shorthand.

The average-size enrollment in touch shorthand classes in the junior colleges was 23; in Cook County high schools, 24. Four schools indicated that two teachers were available and qualified to teach the machine shorthand courses; one indicated that ten teachers were available; and the rest indicated that only one teacher was available to teach the courses. About 80% of the respondents were unable to determine how many of their students had employed their machine shorthand skill professionally after leaving school.

Comments from the respondents concerning the effectiveness and importance of their touch shorthand programs ranged from "Certainly less than spectacular" to an enthusiastic, "Our enrollment in this course has nearly tripled due to a program of informing students about touch shorthand and its career possibilities." The size of the school enrollment appeared to be a major factor in determining the success of the machine shorthand program. The larger the school, the better its chance of succeeding with a touch shorthand program. As one respondent said, "Small school enrollments make the success of touch shorthand questionable." In one of the smaller junior colleges, touch shorthand was taught one year as a pilot course with only six enrolled; by the end of the year, only one or two

remained. "No interest," concluded the instructor. However, "Those who are interested are very interested," reports another junior college respondent. "Interest seems to be growing," says another junior college instructor, referring to a newly implemented court reporting program.

Several junior college instructors felt that machine shorthand was easier for students to learn than manual shorthand, and that students who might have failed in "normal" shorthand sometimes succeeded with touch shorthand. At least, report several at both high school and junior college level, students should have a choice between manual and machine shorthand. As one respondent said, "We believe that secretarial students should be allowed to make a choice about which shorthand skill they want to acquire."

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Conclusions

Interest in machine shorthand is showing a substantive growth in Illinois at both the high school and junior college levels. The trend is also upward in the high schools of St. Louis, although the actual numbers of interested schools are still small. Indianapolis does not give any evidence of interest in machine shorthand at the high school level at present.

Junior colleges of Illinois are the strongest proponents of touch shorthand, with 63% now offering or planning to offer touch shorthand programs. Most junior colleges began their touch shorthand programs within the last four years, with the greatest percentage having begun their programs during the last year (1972-1973).

The vocational objectives of the programs are two-fold; secretarial at the high school level; both secretarial and court reporting at the junior college level. Those schools which are planning touch shorthand programs in the future are doing so primarily because of student requests for the courses. Others believe that students should have a choice between manual and machine shorthand programs.

The survey indicates that a sufficient number of schools in the area surveyed offer touch shorthand courses to warrant teacher education courses in methods of teaching machine shorthand. Employment opportunities also appear to be ample for teachers qualified to teach these courses.

Recommendations

On the basis of the findings of this study, the investigator recommends the following:

1. Give added emphasis to courses in Methods of Teaching Machine Shorthand. Trends indicate a growing interest in machine shorthand skill, and qualified teachers are in fairly short supply.
2. Instructors of machine shorthand, particularly at the junior college level, would profit by communicating with one another, especially in the area of standardizing skill requirements in the sequence of touch shorthand courses.
3. A study similar to the present one should be made of four-year colleges to determine the extent to which machine shorthand skill courses are being offered or considered.
4. Studies similar to the present one should be made on a wider geographic scale so that regional and national trends might be measured.

APPENDIX

EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY

SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

CHARLESTON, ILLINOIS 61920

OFFICE OF THE DEAN
PHONE: AREA 217 581-2328

DEPARTMENTS

ACCOUNTING	581-2128
BUSINESS EDUCA. & REC'L STUDIES	581-2627
MANAGEMENT	581-2020
MARKETING	581-2821
(MBA PROGRAM)	581-3018

February 21, 1973

Dear fellow educator:

Eastern Illinois University offers a teacher-education course titled Touch Shorthand in the Secretarial Curriculum. The course is designed primarily to introduce teachers to the machine and the basic theory of the machine-shorthand system. Upon completion of the course, the teachers are prepared to offer the course as a skill at the secondary or college level.

In order to assess more accurately the demand for teachers in this area and to determine what standards of performance are required by those schools offering the course as a skill, we have drawn up the enclosed questionnaire.

We would appreciate your completing the questionnaire and returning it to us in the enclosed stamped envelope. (Notice that if Touch Shorthand is not offered in your school, you need answer questions 1 through 4 only.)

High schools and junior colleges are taking part in the survey. We hope that YOU and YOUR SCHOOL will be one of the participants. Without you, our results will be less than complete.

If you would like a copy of the results, just type your name and school address at the bottom of this letter and return it with the completed questionnaire.

Thank you sincerely.

Respectfully,

Rose Ann Bryce, Ed.D., CPS
Associate Professor

____ Yes, I would like a copy of the results of this survey. Please send to:

_____

_____

_____

1. Is a Machine Shorthand (Touch Shorthand) course currently offered in your curriculum?

_____Yes _____No

If NO, please answer questions 2, 3, and 4:

2. Is serious consideration being given to adding Machine Shorthand to your curriculum in the future?

_____Yes _____No

3. If Machine Shorthand IS planned, is this due to:

____student requests for the course?
____other reasons _____
_____

4. If Machine Shorthand IS NOT planned, is this due to:

____Lack of student interest shown
____Lack of funds to purchase machines
____Lack of staff person trained to teach the machine
____Lack of conviction as to need for course
____Other reason (_____)

If YES, Machine Shorthand IS taught, please answer 5 - 16:

5. At which grade level(s) is the course(s) taught?
___Grade 8 ___Grade 10 ___Grade 12
___Grade 9 ___Grade 11 ___Jr. College ___Adult Ed.

6. Courses taught at your school: (Please check:)

Course	No. of semesters
____ Touch Shorthand I	____
____ Touch Shorthand II	____
____ Touch Shorthand III	____
____ Court Reporting	____
____ Other(_____)	____

7. Minimum dictation speed/accuracy percentage required to pass the course is:

Course	Minimum Dictation Speed		Required Accuracy Percentage
Touch Shorthand I	_____wam	at	_____% Acc.
Touch Shorthand II	_____wam	at	_____% Acc.
Touch Shorthand III	_____wam	at	_____% Acc.
Court Reporting	_____wam	at	_____% Acc.
Other(_____)	____wam	at	_____% Acc.

8. _____= total student enrollment in Touch Shorthand.

9. _____= total No. of students in your school (college).

10. _____= No. of teachers assigned to Touch Shorthand.

11. Touch Shorthand has been offered at your school for _____ years.

12. Which of the following best describes the vocational objectives of your course:
_____Secretarial use
_____Specialized secretarial (Legal, Medical,_____)
_____Court reporting
_____Both secretarial and court reporting

13. Approximate percentage of students who use Touch Shorthand professionally after course completion is _____.

14. Is student dropout percentage higher in Touch Shorthand than in manual shorthand (Gregg, Pitman, etc.)?
_____Yes _____No

15. Does Touch Shorthand attract more students than does manual shorthand?
_____Yes _____No

16. Your added comments on effectiveness or importance of Touch Shorthand in your curriculum:
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY.